

New Pro Se Materials a Customer Service “Plus”

As part of its commitment to improve services for all New Jersey citizens, the Judiciary has released a new set of helpful materials to assist people who want to try to represent themselves in court without an attorney. The release followed successful testing in three counties.

“Pro se litigants—that is, citizens who represent themselves—deserve informational materials that are

clear, accurate and easy to understand,” said Richard J. Williams, Administrative Director of the Courts.

“Our new pro se packets will benefit all litigants who, for reasons of choice or financial need, represent themselves in New Jersey courts.”

The Judiciary’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Pro Se Materials developed the new packets over the last

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Judiciary Times

The newsletter of the Judiciary, State of New Jersey

More Space, Less Waste: Supreme Court Directive To Speed Up Disposal of Old Court Records

by Linda Brown Holt

Old court records never die, they just...accumulate! If you placed the state’s millions of inactive court file papers end to end, they would probably extend from



Space....the final frontier. This corridor of old court records in the Superior Court Records Center is a small part of the thousands of files in storage statewide. The Judiciary will reclaim thousands of cubic feet of space thanks to an accelerated retention schedule directed by the Supreme Court this spring. (Photo by L. Holt)

the Delaware River to the Great Lakes...and beyond. Stashed in warehouses, crammed into courthouse basements and stuffed into cubicles throughout New Jersey, old court papers linger on long after they have exhausted their original usefulness.

“Actually, we don’t keep these files forever, it just *seems* like we do,” said Kate McCann, records manager for Superior Court. McCann pointed out that a retention schedule already in place allows for the periodic destruction of certain files.

But there will soon be an *accelerated* pace to the removal and recycling of paper files that have outlived their usefulness. Thanks to a Supreme Court directive, expected to have taken effect by the time this newsletter is published, the time will be shortened for retaining certain types of files.

Under the new directive, paper files of criminal records, for example, would be retained for 20 years for third and fourth degree convictions and 40 years for first and second-degree convictions. Capital cases would continue to remain in the permanent files.

Non-paper files will remain

“This doesn’t mean that all traces of these cases will disappear,” said McCann. “Historians and others interested in legal archives can rest assured that we’ll always have records of these cases,

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*Notes from the Director***Customer Service: It's Everyone's Business**

by Judge Richard J. Williams
Administrative Director of the Courts

Whether it's bad or good, customer service is something we've all experienced first-hand.

We know what it's like to wait in needlessly long lines, to be ignored by staff attending to personal business, or to have repeated phone calls to a business

or service agency ignored or incorrectly transferred.

At the same time, most of us can remember with pleasure the clerk who told us about an in-store special or a service provider who made time for us even when we didn't have an appointment.

rity, fairness and quality service.

But while quality service is clearly one of the pillars of the Judiciary's fundamental mission, we still have much to learn as we seek to improve as a customer service organization. How can we build on the Judiciary's already excellent record in customer service?

Seven steps to extraordinary customer service

There are seven steps each of us can take as we strive each day to improve our performance in this critical area.

First, we need to know the **definition** of customer. A customer is each and every individual who contacts our office or reaches us by phone, e-mail, letter or in person. This individual is potentially our ally in building public trust and confidence in the Judiciary statewide. A customer may be someone filing a suit or on probation, but he or she may also be a vendor, a journalist or the file clerk down the hall.

Second, we need to focus on **attitude**. Each customer deserves to be treated in a pleasant, helpful manner. It is a privilege to help others in the service of justice, and our actions, facial expressions, even the care with which we dress should show how seriously we take our charge.

Third, we should constantly improve our ability to **listen**. Sometimes what customers *say* is not what they *mean*. We need to listen to what may be the underlying concern they need resolved. We can facilitate this process by

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Judge Richard J. Williams

Increasingly, businesses and non-profits alike are beginning to realize that the quality of customer service is as important as the quality of the product or service they provide. Half-hearted or *pro forma* efforts will not do. Nothing less than first-rate customer service is now being pursued by the most progressive companies and agencies.

While the importance of customer service may be news to certain organizations, I am happy to report that it is already part of the culture of the Judiciary. Our logo, shown on the last page of this newsletter, confirms that New Jersey courts are dedicated to principles of independence, integ-

Judiciary Uses New Technologies To Protect Victims of Domestic Violence

Mary Doe was terrified.

A resident of Bergen County, she was visiting Ocean County on business when her estranged husband, John, showed up outside her hotel. She had a restraining order against him in Bergen, but in the press of business, had forgotten to bring the document with her. Without the actual order, the police could not act immediately to protect her from the man who had abused her for a decade.

This fictitious encounter could have occurred in 1995. Today, the same scenario would have a far more positive outcome for Mary and other victims of domestic violence.

Thanks to the foresightedness of Judiciary leadership, the talent and hard work of staff, and the latest advances in technology, domestic violence victims in New Jersey have more protections than ever before. And the list of benefits keeps growing.

"New Jersey is definitely a national leader in the use of technologies to protect domestic violence victims," said Harry Cassidy, Family Division chief. "We're providing police officers with instantaneous sources of information and more complete data, and keeping firearms out of the hands of offenders."

Family Division staff, working closely with Information Technology Office professionals, are using an ensemble of computer applications and resources to store information quickly and accurately, and to make sure decisionmakers have immediate access to life-saving data.

One of these applications is the New Jersey Central Registry, which has been in operation for about two years.

With the Central Registry, law enforcement officials have 24/7 access to information about restraining orders and complaints against offenders. "Law enforcement officers must consult it when they are dispatched to the scene of a domestic violence case," said Cassidy. "With this tool, the victim no longer has to be in possession of the actual restraining order."



The Central Registry also is part of the background check when a person attempts to apply for a gun permit or purchase a firearm.

Because it is the only state in which the Central Registry is also the official record of the court, New Jersey is well positioned to be a leader in the development of a national registry to protect domestic violence victims traveling to other parts of the country.

Other technologies spring to the fore if a restraining order is violated. At the Municipal level, an Automated Complaint System (ACS) form now contains a check-off box for domestic violence. Victims now can also file complaints at any time in their local police station and view

information about domestic violence at the Judiciary's Web site, available on computers at libraries and community service agencies and organizations.

A function of PROMIS/GAVEL, a Criminal Division application used by every Superior Court and Prosecutor's Office, generates a series of letters to update victims regarding the status of their cases.

And the Family Automated Case Tracking System (FACTS), a computer application with nine docket types in use for the past 15 years, now provides seamless connections with other agencies and sources of information and assistance.

"We now can record out-of-state orders in the central registry and include fingerprint ID numbers in the Central Registry to help officers link to Criminal and Municipal-Criminal records," said Cassidy. "Later this year, updates to temporary restraining orders and dismissals will be entered directly into FACTS from the courtroom."

With more than 44,000 new domestic violence complaints filed each year in New Jersey, the Judiciary's approach bonds caring professionalism with the latest advances in technology to protect individuals whose homes are no longer safe havens. "We are constantly making improvements to increase the level of protection and support," said Cassidy. "Working in tandem with other state agencies, the Judiciary continues to seek new ways to help protect victims."

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Middlesex Justice Symposium Sheds Light On How to Fund At-Risk Youth Programs

Bright-eyed young people teamed up with judges, parents, police, school leaders and even "Noah's Ark" on Jan. 18 as 250 guests and participants joined together in support of programs for at-risk youth in Middlesex County.

The energizing event was the Fourth Juvenile Justice Symposium held in the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick. And while this year's theme was, "Awareness of Funding Allocations Available for At-Risk Youth Programs," the full-day event was so much more, providing a forum for open communication and building understanding among young people, families, and court and community leadership.

The sponsorship reflected a broad range of support from diverse organizations and caring professionals in the county. The Middlesex County Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns (VACMC) sponsored this year's gathering in collaboration with the Middlesex Family Division, the Middlesex County Bar Association, the Middlesex County Council for Children's Services, the Middlesex County Human Relations Commission, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)- Metuchen/Edison Chapter.

Reginald Johnson, chair of the Middlesex County Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns,

moderated a program filled with information sharing and hands-on workshops designed to give people real tools to improve lives in their neighborhoods.

Michele LaBrada, vice chair, oversaw program planning for this year's conference. The morning program opened with a panel featuring key Middlesex

leaders: the Superintendent of Schools, Mary Jean Guidette, the Middlesex Vicinage Family Division Manager, Charles Hager, Judge Roger Daly (Family Division) and two administrators from the Juvenile Justice Commission, Bernice Manshel and Mark Ferrante.

Afternoon workshops focused on funding sources and

alternative community-based programs as well as focus groups, a mock trial and police-youth programs.

Alternative youth programs highlighted at the conference were Noah's Ark Outreach and the North Brunswick Police Department's Straight-Up Program. Noah's Ark Outreach focuses on families at-risk for juvenile delinquency, encouraging mentors and inspiring young people. The Straight-Up Program introduces young people to new ways of thinking and working, and leads to greater self-esteem.

With the strong support of Assignment Judge Robert A. Longhi and the Trial Court Administrator, Gregory Edwards, the Middlesex Vicinage Advisory Committee on Minority Concerns has consistently reached out to its local community, including various agencies and organizations, schools, police, treatment programs and services, parents and youth to educate them about the court and court programs and services and the continuing problems of minority youth in their county.

The dialogue which has resulted from these continuing efforts has forged a stronger working relationship among those organizations and agencies whose focus is on youth in the county.



Essex Bar Foundation Committees Honor Helen Kaiser of ES Panel

Two committees of the Essex County Bar Foundation honored Helen Kaiser, program coordinator of the Early Settlement Panel (ESP) during a dinner recently.

Kaiser has been coordinator for 10 years, during which time the Essex County ESP program became one of the strongest in the state, according to the Foundation's Family Law and Family Bench Bar Committees.

Kaiser has served 28 years in Essex County and previously served as secretary for three judges.

Mercer's Cynthia VanEk Named Child Support Supervisor of the Year

Cynthia VanEk of the Mercer County Probation Services Child Support Unit, was named Supervisor of the Year recently at the 19th Annual New Jersey Child Support Conference in Atlantic City. A vicinage assistant chief probation officer, VanEk was chosen for her outstanding performance as a probation child support manager.

VanEk was nominated for the award by Assignment Judge Linda R. Feinberg, Michael Green, vicinage chief probation officer; Linda Anthony, assistant Family Division manager; and Dennis Micia, director of welfare, all with the Mercer Vicinage. To be considered for the award, candidates must have implemented innovative programs, cooperated with other agencies, demonstrated leadership and good management techniques, and established and attained management goals.

VanEk began her career as a student intern in Mercer's Probation Service Child Support Unit. After becoming an investigator, she rose through the ranks of Child Support as a probation officer, senior probation officer and supervising probation officer.

VanEk established cooperative working relationships with the Family Court, the Mercer County Welfare Agency and the County Sheriff's Department, resulting in better coordination of services.

Under her leadership, the unit continues to make progress in the areas of enforcement and customer service. Identifying customer service as one her top priorities, VanEk established ongoing customer service training and implemented the use of customer service surveys. A special area was created in the child support unit to receive and serve customers.

"She is an excellent supervisor and has mastered the talent for encouraging staff to develop and achieve high performance goals," noted Judge Feinberg. As a result of staff efforts, Mercer County Child Support Division exceeded its collection goal for a third consecutive year.

"Cindy, in our estimation, is truly a role model for us all," commented Green. "Through her hard work, commitment to service and professionalism, she has risen through the ranks of our profession. We are all proud of her achievements..."

Elaine Dietrich Appointed Counsel to Judge Williams

Elaine D. Dietrich of Princeton has been appointed Counsel to Richard J. Williams, Administrative Director of the Courts, New Jersey Judiciary.

"I am delighted to welcome Elaine Dietrich to her new role with the Administrative Office of the Courts," said Judge Williams. "Elaine brings to her new position an impressive background in legal affairs and a profound grasp of the most urgent issues facing our courts. Her commitment to fairness, integrity and quality service will make her an invaluable asset to the Judiciary as we seek continuously to improve services to citizens."

Dietrich previously served consecutively as attorney, chief and administrator of the Labor and Employee Relations Unit of the Administrative Office of the Courts since joining the Judiciary in 1993. A graduate of Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan, Dietrich served as a law clerk in Superior Court in Trenton from 1988 to 1989 and as a litigation attorney with Dietrich,

Dietrich & Mikulski, P.C., from 1990 to 1992. She served as a deputy attorney general with the Department of Law and Public Safety from 1989 to 1990 and from 1992 to 1993.



Elaine D. Dietrich

Dietrich serves on the Supreme Court of New Jersey District VII Ethics Committee; as a member and trustee of the Mercer County Bar Association; and as a member of the Mercer County Women's Law Caucus.

Born and raised in Trenton, Dietrich graduated from Notre Dame High School, Lawrenceville. Her father, J. Raymond Dietrich, a Trenton attorney for nearly 50 years, currently practices law with two of his five daughters, Virginia M. Dietrich and Joanne M. Dietrich, in the law firm

of Dietrich and Dietrich.

"I look forward to continuing to work with Judge Williams as the Judiciary seeks to provide consistent, high-quality services to all the people of our state," Dietrich said.

New Pro Se Materials a Customer Service “Plus”

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two years with extensive input from judges, statewide court staff and the Supreme Court Committee on Minority Concerns. The Judiciary estimates that 85,000 people each year file small claims and special civil complaints without a lawyer.

There are separate packets for each of the following areas: small claims/auto; small claims/non-auto; appeal of a municipal court judgment; and the special civil part. The forms and other information included in the packets may be used in any superior court in the state.

These are the first in a series of packets to be developed in the areas of the court where people most frequently represent themselves. Others will cover various

actions in family and civil courts.

The packets were tested in Essex, Hudson and Mercer Counties where more than 80 percent of all users found them to be either “very helpful” or “helpful,” while three-fourths of small claims filers and two-thirds of special civil filers were able to complete the forms without assistance.

Materials provided in the packets include information on what to expect in court, forms, definitions and concise, step-by-step directions.

Using the correct packet, citizens should be able to file a claim without an attorney in small claims court. However, the packets for filing a special civil com-

plaint and for appealing a municipal court judgment suggest that litigants should consider legal representation in these more complicated areas of law. “The court system can be confusing,” the special civil material states. “It is a good idea to get a lawyer if you can.”

Still, if litigants are unable or unwilling to be represented by a lawyer, the new packets will help them navigate through the court system.

The new pro se packets are available at all New Jersey superior courts and at the Judiciary’s Web site, <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/>. The municipal appeals packet is available at the municipal courts.

On the Light Side

Passaic Vicinage Judges Retain Championship Cup

by Frank M. Donato, J.S.C.

For the third year in a row, the Passaic County’s Judge Golf Team successfully defended the Vicinage Cup at the annual Vicinage Cup Judge’s Tournament. The Cup’s Founder and Creator is Frank M. Donato, J.S.C. of the Civil Division. The team’s captain is Joseph J. Riva, J.S.C., of the Criminal Division and the director of golf is George E. Sabbath, J.S.C. of the Family Division. The Cup’s dedication reads:

“The Vicinage Cup is created as perpetual Challenge Cup for friends of golf among the vicinages. Any vicinage shall always be entitled to the right to challenge for the Vicinage Cup. Only Superior Court Judges of New Jersey or similar judges of

general jurisdictions may play in the Vicinage Cup Matches. The successful challenger does not win the Cup, but only gains temporary possession of the Cup and the absolute obligation of Defending the Cup and thus becomes the next Defender. The perpetuation of the tradition of the Cup is thus assured”.

The first tournament was held in 1998 at Bowling Green Golf Club in Morris County. The second tournament followed in 1999 at the Pine Barrens Golf Club in Ocean County. The Year 2000 event was held at the Linwood Country Club in Atlantic County. Passaic’s team won all three tournaments, successfully defending the Cup and keeping it at home, emblematic of the team’s supremacy. Captain Riva, the

groups’ top player, attributed the team’s success to grit, skill, grace under pressure and to a solid team effort by members. In addition to Judges Riva, Donato and Sabbath, the team included Judges Anthony Graziano, Ronald Sokalski, Michael Diamond and Glen Wenzel.

Riva praised the efforts of all team members especially in the absence of Judge Scancarella, Presiding Civil Part Judge, who he described as “the world’s greatest living judge athlete” and Assignment Judge Passero, a solid contributor to the first two victories, who he noted is a “solid clutch player in the tradition of Hogan.” Next year, with these great players back on board, we expect to do even better.

With the expectation that many vicinages will challenge for the Cup next year, Judge Riva promises to field a strong team from Passaic County.

Customer Service: It's Everyone's Business

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politely helping customers focus their questions so we can help them find solutions.

Customers are a high priority

Fourth, we need to help customers get **results**. Sometimes this process may be complex and seem to distract us from other activities. At these times, we need to ask ourselves, "Who or what is more important than our customers?" I think you'll find this a good way to stay on track with service-related issues.

Fifth, we need to take the time with our customers that they deserve. Time is a precious commodity for each of us, and there never seem to be enough

hours in the day to get everything done. This is all the more reason for taking the time to show we care about customers and to provide a level of service that cannot be reached without an investment of time. Where do we find this time? It has been my observation that following sound principles of customer service from the first encounter eliminates many of the distractions that turn into wasted minutes and hours. Finding out exactly what a customer wants through better listening skills, for example, may lead to a quicker solution.

Sixth, we need to make sure our offices and workspaces are **organized** with customers in

mind. We need to identify possible service requests in advance and to have the necessary tools and personnel available. This is something we may already do well. However, because it is such an important point, we need to constantly review and reevaluate the way we work from a customer service perspective.

Finally, number seven, we need to remember that the book is never closed on a customer contact. You *could* say, **a customer is forever**. There is always the need for assessment, follow-up and a plan for future improvement. Customer service is far more than satisfying one citizen. Each person who contacts us may give a message about the Judiciary to countless other individuals. Do we want these customers to convey a positive message of quality service, or the unthinkable alternative?

Each month, I see many wonderful testimonials from customers attesting to the excellent customer service they have received from our staff. By striving for continuous improvement, each of us can make extraordinary customer service the regular course of events. All it takes is seven steps and the realization that, by our actions, we can make a positive contribution to equal justice for all.

Statewide Recognition for a Job Well Done



The Conference of Chief Probation Officers sponsored a Trainers' Recognition Dinner at the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex on Jan. 30. The event included recognition of entry-level trainers from Probation (Supervision and Child Support); Criminal; Family; staff safety trainers (from all divisions), EEO/AA trainers and AOC's Education and Development Unit. Among those attending the event were (left to right): John Higgins, vicinage chief probation officer, Somerset; Nancy Allen, AOC; Allen Quintavella, vicinage assistant chief probation officer, Bergen; John P. McCarthy Jr., director of Trial Court Services; Gayle Maher (at the time, Judiciary training coordinator, Somerset; appointed chief, Supervision Services, Juvenile, effective April 23); Patt Fowler, AOC probation specialist (and party planner).

Tina Matos Honored

The Essex County Bar Association has presented a Merit Award to Tina Matos, the EEO/AA Officer in the Essex Vicinage.

More Space, Less Waste: Supreme Court Directive To Speed Up Disposal of Old Court Records

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whether they be in computer files or microfilm.” McCann is quick to point out the dangers of storing material entirely on PCs with technologies that may change and become obsolete over time.

The records retention schedule covers many kinds of printed materials, not just transcripts. In the Civil Division, for example, files affected by the schedule may include cases, calendars, index records and docket books.

AOC Reorganizes To Improve Services

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) announced its reorganization earlier this year to streamline its structure and to improve services to vicinages, employees and the public. The following changes have taken effect:

ISD becomes ITO—The former Information Systems Division (ISD) is now known as the Information Technology Office (ITO). With this change, Jim Rebo was named the Judiciary’s Chief Information Officer and joined other directors at the top level of the AOC organization.

Key additions to Trial Court Services—Trial Court Services now includes the Municipal Court Services Division, headed by Dennis L. Bliss, and the Quantitative Research Unit, headed by Mark Davies.

Counsel and EEO/AA changes—Keith M. Endo was named counsel to the Ethics 2000 Commission established by the Supreme Court. Elaine D. Dietrich replaced him as counsel to the Administrative Director. The counsel’s office combines its current legal work with the law-related work of the employment law section, including the hearing officer role, previously under Ms. Dietrich’s direction. EEO/AA under Bobby E. Battle and Minority Concerns under Yolande P. Marlow now report to Deputy Administrative Director Theodore J. Fetter.

Units reassigned—Judicial Education, headed by Richard L. Saks, and Professional Services, headed by Patrick J. Monahan, now are part of the Office of Professional and Govern-

Using the Automated Computer Management System (ACMS), Judiciary staff now can keep track of the dates when files expire. Documents then can be shredded and recycled with the aid of a vendor specializing in records destruction.

While the new directive will accelerate the retention schedule, McCann points out that a regular schedule of file removal has been in place since the ‘80s. “In the past five years, we destroyed about 12,000 cartons a year,” she said. “The new process will build on this foundation.”

Court reporters’ noted included

While vicinage staffs are enthusiastic about the prospect of more space and fewer old files, there is one area in which they particularly euphoric: court reporters’ notes. The retention period for these two-inch-wide, fan-folded strips of paper has been “forever, at least for criminal cases,” said Jeff Newman, chief of reporting and technical services. “We have had to store cartons of notes in court-houses and other facilities. Now, cartons of these files can be disposed of, freeing space for other uses.”

Such a massive undertaking is being rolled out with careful planning and preparation. Records coordinators—a new Judiciary position—are (or will be) available in each vicinage to assist with records management. Other elements being developed to ensure success include an implementation plan and a number of activities designed to introduce the new retention schedules to the vicinages.

In the meantime, public interest in viewing files remains high. According to McCann, thousands of customers visit the Superior Court Records Center on Jersey St. in Trenton each year to review civil cases. In the cheerful front offices, helpful staff assist customers seeking information from files as recent as yesterday’s news or as old as the Civil War.

These services will continue to thrive even as boxes upon boxes of printed material, some of it caged in securely locked cells, find new life as mulch or paper pulp in an east coast recycling plant.

“The long anticipated revised schedule is a godsend,” said Thomas G. Dibble, Essex vicinage records manager. “Not only will it help us save space, but more important, it will allow for better day-to-day management of one of our most important court resources.”

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Vicinages recount adventures with the "Ex-Files"

Tireless Efforts Put a Cap on Record Overload

Here are just a few of the ways vicinages have been coping with tons of old records, and what the new Supreme Court directive on records retention means for the future:

Volunteers, interns and staff have worked together in **Sussex** to shred over 4,300 cubic feet of files. "Shredding is a daily ritual," reports Elizabeth Domingo, assistant trial court administrator. The vicinage is also working with county officials to destroy "ancient" records from the basement of the Fire and Police Academy and the County Clerk's office. "And we can't wait to clean up the court reporter notes pursuant to the new schedule," she added with a smile.

In **Burlington**, progress has been steady and even. Boxes of files no longer clutter hallways and areas outside of offices. Some material is stored with the county in the jail basement, and much progress has been made in microfilming, reports Leigh Eastty, general operations manager. Certainly, one of the most popular staff members in Mount Holly is Isaac Boykin, who became the vicinage's records coordinator on March 12.

Passaic keeps old files in several locations, including an outside storage facility. The vicinage has secured funding to continue renovations to the courthouse basement "rec room" (that's "rec" as in "records"). With open shelving, the renovated basement provide cost effective space for no-longer-needed files. Best of all,

Passaic's Records Retention Committee is "eagerly anticipating a massive records 'purge' pursuant to the new retention directive, according to Phyllis Hornstra.

Essex reports storing nearly 15,000 cubic feet of files at a records center 12 miles from the courthouse. Following the old retention schedule, the vicinage disposed of hundreds of cubic feet of files and boxed and shipped the equivalent of *250 five-drawer vertical cabinet cabinets* to the Division of Archives and Records Management for microfilming.

With the new directive, Essex can dispose of at least 300 additional "filing cabinets" full of obsolete files *weighing about 75 tons*, according to Thomas G. Dibble, vicinage records manager.



Valuable old records of historical interest will be conserved and maintained. (Photo by L. Holt)

Jails and basements are a recurrent theme among vicinages eyeing storage space, and **Atlantic-Cape May** is no exception. Clarence Dickerson, general operations manager, reports that the old jail, one block from the Atlantic Criminal Courthouse, and the basement of the Cape May Courthouse both provide storage for old records. Ditto a large county-owned warehouse three block from Atlantic's Civil Courthouse.

Ocean is hard at work on the Family microfiche project, and plans to destroy selected dockets dated up to and including 1990. Lisa Joyce, assistant systems coordinator, reports storage in an off-site county facility and a room in—no surprise—the courthouse basement.

Microfilm usage is helping **Mercer** free up storage space for new files and records. According to Debra D'Amico, records manager, Mercer recycled 184 cubic feet of old records in January.

Bergen stores its older files in a warehouse in Garfield. From there, the files generally go to microfilming or are destroyed per the records retention schedule. Civil generates close to 60,000 records per year between its law and special civil sections. Bergen is in the process of redesigning its record storage process, and hopes to see some real results starting next year.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK April 22-28, 2001

The 2001 national theme: AChange the World . . . Volunteer!@

Ocean's LaBruto Recalls Early Years of Volunteer Program

by Jeanette King
Coordinator of Volunteer Training

With more than 5,000 participants statewide, the Judiciary's Volunteer Program is a true success story. But this remarkable program has a relatively short history. In a sense, it can trace its current success to one extraordinary individual: MaryEllen LaBruto of the Ocean Vicinage.

In February 1989, MaryEllen accepted the challenge to increase volunteer participation in the Ocean Vicinage. At the time a novice in the area of volunteer program management, she now admits that she did not know the potential that volunteer programs could have in the courts. Today, these programs have blossomed, and MaryEllen has the longest tenure of any Judiciary employee in this position.

At the time, there were few resources to guide her in the development of a vicinage volunteer program. To learn more, she took courses offered by Rutgers Continuing Education program and read available literature on the subject of volunteers.

Building on this knowledge, MaryEllen began to develop and propose innovative volunteer initiatives to Assignment Judge Eugene Serpentelli to enhance the existing volunteer programs already in place in the vicinage. She also shared her plans for ways to expand the program and to offer more opportunities to the community for participating in court volunteer programs.

Judge Serpentelli encouraged MaryEllen's work and supported the new volunteer initiative. He already

had put into place a new volunteer program on jury issues, the Ocean County Citizens Judicial Advisory Committee. This committee's mandate was to examine the jury system and make recommendations for improving the experience of jury duty, a responsibility that later expanded to other areas of the court system.

MaryEllen's leadership has resulted in a volunteer workforce



MaryEllen LaBruto

in Ocean County that is 550 persons strong. Ocean volunteers offer services in a wide range of programs, including minority concerns, child placement review, domestic violence complaints, mediation, probation and other areas.

As a result of her experience, this year's national theme for volunteers—AChange the World . . . Volunteer!@—has real meaning for MaryEllen. She states that volunteers in Ocean have significantly changed *her* world from the time she specialized in criminal case management (sex assault and child abuse) and mediating child custody cases.

"It is wonderful to be sur-

rounded by concerned, caring individuals who simply want to make a contribution to helping people who need additional assistance, may be economically disadvantaged or are just going through a particularly difficult period of their lives," MaryEllen said recently.

MaryEllen notes that many Ocean Vicinage volunteers are working full-time, raising families and even attending school, and yet they make the time to give back to their community.

Drawing on 12 years of experience, MaryEllen shares the following advice to vicinages thinking about expanding their volunteer programs:

Take it slow and steady; look at what you have and where you want to go; carefully screen and place your volunteers. You are successful when you can:

- select the right individual for a given program,
- offer on-going educational and training opportunities, and
- retain your volunteer workforce because you have offered them meaningful and fulfilling work.

These are some of the elements of a successful program which over the years have sustained MaryEllen LaBruto and made her work so enjoyable. Because of her pioneering work and the tireless, daily efforts of all staff who work with volunteers, the program continues to grow and to attract new volunteers to share in the Judiciary's commitment to independence, integrity, fairness and quality service.

Camden Caseload Benefits Mentally Ill Probationers

Building on the success of its program for mentally ill probationers sentenced in superior court, the Camden County Probation Division launched a municipal mental health caseload in November 2000.

Under the direction of Senior Probation Officer Debra Thomson, the program links probation officers with mental health agencies and municipal courts to help officers provide the best services possible.

Probation Officer Elaine Mancini notes that Camden's specialized caseload for mentally ill probationers sentenced in superior court has grown steadily since it was launched in April 1998.

Justices' Portraits Return

Portraits of former New Jersey Justices, safely stored during building repairs, were returned to the walls of the Judiciary's Office of Public Affairs recently.

The portraits were hung on the fifth floor of the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex in

Trenton, where the Justices now can watch over the busy operations of the press, constituent relations and publications units.

Shown here are two of the portraits: Alexander T. McGill (left), who served from 1887 to 1900; and Alfred Reed (right), who served from 1875 to 1911.



Somerset Mural Honors Late Judge Halpern

A Revolutionary War mural painted in honor of the late Judge Joseph Halpern is now on display in the Somerset County Courthouse.

A group of the judge's former law clerks commissioned Adrienne Crombie of Frenchtown to produce the 6 x 18 foot acrylic painting on canvas. Titled,

"Somerset County, Crossroads of the Revolution," the painting depicts important scenes in Somerset County history, including the burning of the courthouse, the capture of Gen. Charles Lee in 1776 and the ambush at Two Bridges.

Fairness, Intelligence, Compassion

Judge Halpern, who died in 1989, was widely respected and admired for his fairness, intelligence and compassion. A lifelong resident of the area, he served as a judge of Somerset County Superior Court, Assignment Judge of Middlesex County and a Presiding Judge for the Appellate Division. Among many leadership positions, he served as chairman of the Supreme Court Crimi-

nal Practice Committee and as president of the Somerset County Bar Association. On many occasions, Judge Halpern sat by designation on the New Jersey Supreme Court when a particular justice was unable to hear a case.



AOC Reorganization

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mental Services headed by David P. Anderson, Jr.

Staff training mission upgraded—Organizational Development and Training under Steve Wilkins now reports to Deputy Administrative Director Fetter.

Sculpture Honors Late Justice William J. Brennan

A bust of the late United States and New Jersey Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., was unveiled during a ceremony in the Supreme Court Courtroom in Trenton on January 30.

The Association of the Federal Bar of the State of New Jersey presented the bust to the Court. The sculptor is Jon Bailey of Indianapolis, Indiana, a 1994 magna cum laude graduate of Rutgers University at Camden. Mr. Bailey also received an MBA from the Yale School of Management in 1997. Speakers at the

ceremony included Association representative Joseph H. Kenney, Esq., and Michael B. Himmel, Esq.; William J. Brennan III, Esq., son of the late Justice; and Daniel J. O'Hern, a retired New Jersey Supreme Court Justice, who once clerked for Justice Brennan. Deborah T. Poritz, Chief Justice, presided over the ceremony.

Born in Newark in 1906, Justice Brennan graduated with honors from the Wharton School of the

University of Pennsylvania. After receiving a degree from Harvard Law School in 1931, he joined the firm of Pitney, Hardin & Ward, where he was made a partner in 1937. He served in the Army in World War II and was discharged as Colonel in 1945. He resigned from

the firm, which then included his name, in 1949 to accept a Superior Court Judgeship. After service as the Assignment Judge for Hudson and Burlington Counties, in 1950 he was elevated to the Appellate Division.

In 1952, Justice Brennan was sworn in as an Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court and became a public spokesman for individual rights during the McCarthy era. He was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by President Dwight David Eisenhower in 1956. Justice Brennan issued 1,360 opinions in his 34 years on the U.S. Supreme Court. Among his most notable opinions are cases that supported freedom of speech (New York Times v. Sullivan), the one-person-one-vote concept (Baker v. Carr) and other principles of justice. He died in 1997.



Corporate Leaders Discuss Ways To Make the Judiciary Even Better

Corporate leaders offered ways to help the Judiciary become better than ever during a panel on the topic, "Internal Consulting--An Insider's Perspective," on Feb. 14. The program was sponsored by the Judiciary Education and Training Council (JETCO).

Judiciary training coordinators and human resources professionals from throughout the state learned about organizational development techniques successfully used by companies such as Reebok, PNC Financial Services, Johnson & Johnson, and Resorts International Casino Hotel, according to Steve Wilkins, the Judiciary's organizational development and training chief.



Learning from corporate examples. Panels included (left to right) Joe Doyle of Johnson & Johnson, Kathie Birkbeck of Resorts International Casino Hotel, Ami Bagby of Vicinage 15 and Lee Goar of Vicinage 11.



Mission Statement of the New Jersey Court System

We are an independent branch of government constitutionally entrusted with the fair and just resolution of disputes in order to preserve the rule of law and to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and law.